

Aeronautical Bookshelf

Airship, Aeroplane, Aircraft: Studies in the History of Terms for Aircraft in English, by Svante Stubelius. Almqvist and Wiksell, P.O. Box 96, Stockholm. Swedish Kr. 25.

It is only natural that there should be a tendency for all of us to cherish two delusions: that we know our mother tongue; and that when we communicate with another Englishman he will understand the words we use in the sense that we ourselves attach to them. It is rather shattering, therefore, to find that the Gothenburg Studies in English, of which this is the seventh volume, can devote a lengthy and interesting treatise to the analysis of the hundred-and-one different senses in which various authorities have used common English words. (One previous volume is solely concerned with the word "do," and another volume is entirely devoted to one use of "should.")

Readers of *Flight*, however, will be more interested in quotations from earlier issues of this journal in which the use and definition of terms for aircraft have been hotly discussed. For example, there have been arguments that an "aeroplane" is only an aerofoil, not the complete aircraft, whilst others objected that an aerofoil cannot be an aeroplane because it is not two-dimensional. As late as December 1953 no less an authority than Sir William Farren wrote, "It might be a good way to commemorate this occasion [the 50th anniversary of the first flight of the Wright brothers] if we decently buried 'aeroplane' and 'airplane' and in future proudly flew our flags on 'airships'."

The following quotation from 1910 sounds today as though it were meant to be funny: "A big blustering fellow stood on the back end of a street car recently and spent a quarter of an hour explaining to a party of his friends the difference between an aeroplane and a monoplane, and when he had finished his friends agreed that he knew all about airships."

Les: anyone should imagine that the need for unambiguous definitions is now safely past, he has only to turn in our non-technical national Press and see the misuse of words, even by the so-called technical correspondents who describe any motor car or ship with a gas turbine as "jet-propelled."

W. J. G.

Men and Machines (a history of D. Napier and Son), by Charles Wilson and William Reader. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Ltd., 7 Cork Street, London, W.1. Price 35s. Illustrated.

VERY few commercial concerns can boast a record of a century-and-a-half in precision engineering. D. Napier and Son are celebrating their 150th anniversary this year, and to mark the occasion they have published a history that is superior to most works of this sort. (Company histories often give such undue consideration to personalities and internal susceptibilities that they make dull reading for anyone outside the firm.)

While engineers may perhaps complain of lack of technical detail here and there, and possibly challenge some of the claims, *Men and Machines* is distinctly readable and contains a wealth of information about early motor car building and aero engine production during a great period in industrial development.

Neither men nor machines are infallible, whatever the inspiring genius or trademark. Essentially a family concern in origin and development—it was built up by only three generations of the same family—Napiers sometimes lacked the broad concept and thinking that so often mark a highly personalized business. They learned that it was possible to pursue an apparently fruitful line of development in aero engines which would end in a blind alley, and the decision to put all the company's eggs into one "air basket" obviously affected its fortunes.

But Napiers are known, and rightly so, for their successes and for the excellence of their products from the early golden years of the motor car to the turboprop and rocket engines of today. Ironically enough, it was in 1942, when the business had never been so large and prosperity apparently more assured, that the firm reached the end of its independent life and became part of English Electric—which was conspicuously fitted to supply some particular deficiencies.

Montague Stanley Napier, grandson of the founder, designed his first motor-car engine in 1899, a two-cylinder vertical model of about 8 h.p. mounted in a Panhard body. It was the beginning of an association with Henry Francis Edge, who was manager of the London branch of the Rubber Tyre Company. Together the two young men fired each other with a desire to advance the cause of automobilism and awakened the country to the possibilities of the enormous new industry.

By 1918, with the impetus given to aero-engine business during the war, Napier, whose mission had once been automobiles, made the hard decision to abandon cars altogether. In collaboration with A. J. Rowledge, he developed the famous Lion 12-cylinder, three-row engine, fitted in some 35 aircraft types in the early twenties.

Napiers took a leading part in the rearmament drive of the thirties, finally coming up with the liquid-cooled Sabre (1938) which powered the Hawker Typhoon and Tempest fighters.

Although some of their post-war engine developments were not financially rewarding, Napiers scored again with their medium-power Eland turboprop, with the Gazelle helicopter engine; and they have also chalked up successes in the development of rocket motors for missiles (e.g., the NRE.17) and for manned aircraft (the Double Scorpion for the Canberra).

Today the company run half-a-dozen production and research centres in and around London. Whatever the future may hold, the skill and know-how built up over such a long period is bound to stand them in good stead, for aviation, despite its rapid growth, still has its roots buried deep in the past.

A. J. W.

Camera in the Sky, by Charles A. Sims, A.I.B.P. Temple Press, Ltd., Bowling Green Lane, London, E.C.1. Price 25s. Illustrated.

THIS is a book the author obviously enjoyed writing, and for those readers who have grown up with the aircraft industry it will vividly recall many notable happenings and aircraft of the past. To those who have come in recently—with the jets, guided missiles and practically no private flying—it will tell of an aeronautical way of life of which hitherto they have had no cognizance.

The author has solved the problem of presenting in an easily studied form his photographs and reminiscences (gathered since he joined No. 84 Squadron at Shaibah in 1923) by classifying them under such headings as "Air Exercises," "Naval Occasions," "Royal Occasions." If the arrangement seems slightly disjointed in effect, it should be remembered that chronological order would have entailed continued and lengthy explanations in pages where every square inch is valuable. The subject-matter really deserves more generous space; it is apparent that there has been difficulty in cramming the pictures and incidents into such small compass.

As Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb observes in his foreword, the aircraft industry has been well served photographically. This is very true of Charles Sims's camera work. In this book is reproduced the cream of his pictures—of personalities, events, places and air-to-air shots of aircraft—of all of which (though the reproduction does not always do him justice) he can be justly proud.

J. Y.

They Flew the Atlantic, by Robert de la Croix. Frederick Muller, Ltd., 110 Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. Price 18s. Illustrated.

NOT since the earliest air conquests of the North Atlantic has the ocean crossing been so much in the news as now, with the recent triumph of the Comet. Stirring though this is, the fact remains that it is but one episode in a story of evolution, a milestone in the transition from piston-engine to turbojet. Britain, after all, scored a previous Atlantic first: for the record, the first non-stop aerial crossing was made by two Englishmen, Alcock and Brown, in a converted Vickers Vimy bomber. It was a long, long time ago—even before Juan Trippe and Boeing.

They Flew the Atlantic underlines two things, if nothing more: the air crossing between America and Europe was an uncertain operation even before the doubts raised by decibels; its final conquest was the joint work of aviators of many nations.

This book tells the story of those pioneers—Walter Wellman, Charles A. Lindbergh, Nungesser and Coli, Levine and Chamberlin, Ruth Elder and the others. One reads of these early flights, successful and otherwise, and marvels again at the vision and enterprise—but without getting quite the atmosphere or sense of real drama. The aviation achievement comes through without the impact of human emotion or purpose. The fact that this otherwise competent work fails on this score may in part be due to the difficulties of translation from the French.

A. J. W.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

Gas Turbines for Aircraft, by Arthur W. Judge. Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 37 Essex Street, London, W.C.2. Price 60s.

Handbook of the Aircraft Industry, edited by J. L. Nayler and T. F. Saunders. George Newnes, Ltd., Tower House, Southampton Street, London, W.C.2. Price 35s.

Electricity in Aircraft, by F. G. Spreadbury. Constable and Co., Ltd., 10-12 Orange Street, London, W.C.2. Price 40s.

Space Flight, by Dr. Carsbie C. Adams. McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., Ltd., 95 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Price 50s 6d.

Flight into Danger, by John Castle and Arthur Hailey. Souvenir Press, Ltd., 94 Charlotte Street, London, W.1. Price 11s 6d.

Nuclear Rocket Propulsion, by R. W. Bussard and R. D. DeLauer. McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., Ltd., 95 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Price 77s 6d.

The Sinking of the Bismarck, by Will Berthold. Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 6 & 7 Clifford Street, London, W.1. Price 16s.

And There Was Light, by Rudolf Thiel. Andre Deutsch, Ltd., 12-14 Carlisle Street, Soho Square, London, W.1. Price 25s.

Flying Witness, by Graham Wallace. Putnam and Co., Ltd., 42 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. Price 25s.

The Air Forces of the World, by William Green and John Fricker. Macdonald and Co. (Publishers), Ltd., 16 Maddox Street, London, W.1. Price 60s.

The Proving Flight, by David Beaty. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. Price 2s 6d.